

Survivals of Magic in Early Roman Religion

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SURVIVALS OF MAGIC IN EARLY ROMAN RELIGION

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So careful a student as Aust writes of Roman religion: "We must agree with Mommsen that there occur only a few traces of belief in spirits and fear of magic in the state religion."¹ And again: "The belief in the magic power of mysterious acts existed, to be sure, among the Romans—perhaps to a lesser degree than among other peoples; but the state religion, at all events, does not countenance it."²

In words of like import, W. Warde Fowler, the great English authority on Roman religion, states that the authorities at Rome early eliminated "from their worship (*ius divinum*) almost all that was magical, barbarous . . . ;" that magic practices are "to be found for the most part surviving, as we might expect, outside the religion of the state; where they survive within its limits, they will be found to have almost entirely lost their original force and meaning."³

¹ *Die Religion der Römer*, p. 24: Im übrigen müssen wir Mommsen darin beistimmen, dass sich von Geisterglauben und Zaubersfurcht in der nationalen Religion nur geringere Spuren finden. . . .

² *Ib.*: Der Glaube an zauberische Wirkungen geheimnisvoller Bräuche ist natürlich auch bei den Römern vorhanden,—vielleicht in geringerem Masse als bei andern Völkern; die Staatsreligion kommt ihm jedenfalls nicht entgegen. . . .

³ *Religious Experience of the Roman People*, p. 24.

These are careful statements and carry great weight. Moreover, they are probably true of the state religion in general. But the numerous ineffectual decrees passed against magic by the Roman senate⁴ seem to make it clear that the state religion did not satisfy all the desires of the early Romans;⁵ so that, although we may be inclined to admit with Servius⁶ that the Romans always condemned the practice of magic as *probrosa*, we cannot forget that Virgil's *pius Aeneas* found the magic power of the golden bough exceedingly useful.⁷

A massing of the evidence, unsatisfactory though it is, will tend to show that the judgments quoted above probably err on the side of caution; and that Roman religion, even state religion, contained much that was a survival from the past when magic was more generally practiced. This I shall endeavor to show.

That we may discuss the subject with greater clearness it is desirable to state exactly how we are to understand and use the terms religion and magic. The former may be defined as "the effective desire to be in right relation to the Power manifesting itself in the universe."⁸ Or, if such a definition appear to some to demand too much of purpose or effort on the part of the worshipper, I am willing to accept as a definition of religion, "The elemental fear or awe which a human being feels in the presence of natural phenomena which he cannot explain." Frazer's definition of religion as

⁴ See the author's *Studies in Magic from Latin Literature*, pp. 12-16.

⁵ Even Aust is compelled to admit (*op. cit.* p. 79): Wo ein lebendiges Objekt des Glaubens fehlt, da breitet sich der Aberglaube mit erschreckender Geschwindigkeit aus.

⁶ *Aen.* IV, 493 cum multa sacra susciperent, semper magica damnarunt; probrosa enim ars habita est.

⁷ Cf. *Aen.* VI, 405-410.

⁸ Ira Howarth, in *International Journal of Ethics*, 1903, p. 205. Howarth's definition forms the basis of much of the discussion in Fowler's *Religious Experience of the Roman People*.

"a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and of human life," involving as it does both faith and works, seems to me to be unacceptable, because it excludes many of the simpler forms of religious experience.⁹ In short, I think to the early Roman "the natural phenomena which he could not explain" were what he usually called his *numina* and the "elemental awe" of which I have spoken he called *religio*. We shall have something more to say about these two words shortly.

Magic we may define as the "exercise of a mysterious mechanical power by an individual on man, spirit or deity, to enforce a certain result."¹⁰ The Romans themselves conceived of magic as "an art based on medicine, astrology and religion, whereby man attempts to control the gods, and thereby to control natural phenomena in accordance with his own selfish desires."¹¹ These two definitions do not differ essentially from one another. In both it is clear that the magician differs from the priest in that he either does not have recourse to the gods at all to accomplish his designs; or if he does have such recourse, it is to command, not to implore, their help.

As my inquiry concerns itself entirely with early Roman religion, I may say that by this I mean the worship of the native Italic gods, the *di indigites*, before that worship was overlaid by Greek and Oriental accretions. This early religion, usually attributed to Numa Pompilius, consists of a body of beliefs and practices characteristic of a rural community, though much of it had of necessity to be carried later into an urban center which could not understand it.

⁹ *Golden Bough*, I, 1, 222.

¹⁰ Fowler, *Relig. Exper.* p. 47. For a detailed discussion of the definition of magic see Marett in *Hastings Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, VIII, pp. 245-247.

¹¹ This definition is composite. See the author's *Stud. in Mag.*, pp. 5-8.

Roman religion of this early and uncontaminated stratum is difficult to investigate, because the evidence had to a great extent disappeared before the beginning either of Roman literature or of Roman inscriptions. Of the literary authorities Varro¹² and Verrius Flaccus¹³ had sufficient interest in the subject and sufficient critical insight to differentiate genuine Roman religion from the later additions, particularly Greek; but, unfortunately, the works of both are known to us only at second hand. A third important literary source is Ovid's *Fasti*,¹⁴ a work based to some extent upon the solid contributions of Varro and Verrius. But Ovid must be used with great care. When he is relating a fact or a personal experience, his statements are accurate and often of great value; but where he is seeking the origin or the explanation of that fact, his poetic fancy and his ready command of the whole field of Greek mythology make him quite untrustworthy.

With one very important exception the inscriptional evidence bearing on the *di indigites* is almost negligible.¹⁵ This one exception, so important that it forms the basis of any thorough study of early Roman religion, is what is known collectively as the *Fasti Anni Iuliani*, or calendars exhibiting the various religious festivals throughout the year; for, though the revised calendars which we have date only from

¹² *Antiquitates Rerum Divinarum*, a work in sixteen books, of which our knowledge is derived almost exclusively from liberal excerpts contained in the *De Civitate Dei* of Augustine. These have been collected into a convenient volume by Agahd.

¹³ Of the utmost importance for us is his work entitled *Fasti Praenestini*, the fragments of which, engraved on marble, were found in 1871 and subsequently. These will be found in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, I², 1, pp. 230-239. Much of the antiquarian material of Festus is also drawn from the works of Verrius. For Ovid's indebtedness to Verrius see Winther, H., *De Fastis Verii Flacci ab Ovidio Adhibitis* (Berlin, 1885).

¹⁴ The best edition is still that of Merkel, R. (Berlin 1841).

¹⁵ The case is entirely different for the religion of the Empire, for which period the inscriptions are very numerous and very informing.

the time of Julius Caesar, the religious festivals of which they treat are undoubtedly of the greatest antiquity.¹⁶

I have said that the early Roman called the "natural phenomena which he could not explain" *numina*, and the awe which he felt in the presence of such powers, *religio*. To discover, therefore, the germ of Roman religion it is necessary for us to know exactly what these two words meant to the primitive Roman farmer or herdsman, as he lived in the midst of his cultivated fields, his pastures and his woods. Of the first word there can be little doubt that it is connected with the verb *nuere*, as Fowler has pointed out,¹⁷ and that it means an undefined spirit or power endowed with a *will* to help or hinder in a definite field of action. It may be the *numen* of the forest or the *numen* of the thunderbolt. But, though it was specific, it was not anthropomorphic, it was not related to other *numina*, there was no theogony. If a tree was to be cut down, the *numen* of the forest was besought to pardon this trespass upon its domain; if the safety of cattle and crops was in doubt, prayer was made to the *numen* of cattle and crops, or perhaps even to the *numen* of those particular cattle and crops. Such an animistic conception, though capable of indefinite expansion, tended to limit the number of important *numina* to the comparatively small group of powers which all the members of the community found it desirable to "be in right relation to." Such powers tended gradually to become hazy divinities, often of doubtful sex.

Ancient definitions of *religio* are instructive. Cicero, in a work of his earlier years, defines it as "the feeling of awe which one has in the presence of a superior phenomenon usually called divine, and the scrupulous effort to propitiate

¹⁶ See *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, I², 1, pp. 203-339. The Roman calendar itself will be found very conveniently presented in Fowler, *Roman Festivals*, pp. 21-32; Wissowa, G., *Religion und Kultus der Römer*², pp. 567-593.

¹⁷ *Relig. Exper.*, p. 118 f.

such a power by proper rites."¹⁸ This is a definition of natural religion divorced from, because earlier than, state religion. But even so we discover in the prominence given the words *cura* and *caerimonia* the formalistic trend of the Roman mind. As to the etymology of the word *religio* both ancient and modern scholars have been divided. Cicero writes in this connection: "Those who used to offer sacrifices and pray whole days that their children might survive them were called *superstitiosi*, a word which took on a broader meaning afterwards; whereas those that carefully observed all that pertained to the adoration of the gods, and, so to speak, went over the service repeatedly (*relegere*), were called *religiosi* . . ."¹⁹ Other competent Roman scholars, however, such as Lucretius, connected the word with *ligare*, to bind, a concept which seems to be inherent also in the use of *religio* in the sense of scruple.²⁰ But we are concerned not so much with ancient definitions or etymologies of the word, *religio*, as with the fact, religion. The force that holds us back, that halts the profane foot, and inspires awe, has, as a scholar has recently written, "been recaptured as a sentiment by the most sophisticated of Latin courtiers in describing the sacred grove upon the Aventine

Lucus Aventino suberat niger ilicis umbra,
Quo posses viso dicere 'numen inest'.

A glance at that dark mysterious grove would bring to your lips the words: 'There is a *numen* in it.'"²¹

¹⁸ *De Inventione*, II, 161: *Religio est quae superioris cuiusdam naturae, quam divinam vocant, curam caerimoniamque adfert.*

¹⁹ *De Nat. Deor.* II, 28, 72: *Nam qui totos dies precabantur et immolabant, ut sibi sui liberi superstites essent, superstitiosi sunt appellati, quod nomen patuit postea latius; qui autem omnia, quae ad cultum deorum pertinerent, diligenter retractarent et tamquam relegerent, sunt dicti religiosi.* . . . Cf. ed. of J. B. Mayor, II, p. 186. On the word itself see especially Fowler, *The Latin History of the Word Religio*, in *Transactions of the Third International Congress for the History of Religions* (Oxford, 1908), II, 169-175.

²⁰ Cf. Plautus, *Merc.* 881; Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* XXIV, 12; XXV, 17. 30; XXVIII, 65.

²¹ Halliday, W. R., *Lectures on the History of Roman Religion* (University Press of Liverpool, 1923), p. 20.

These lines are sufficient to make clear the emotional content both of *religio* and of *numen*.

So much, then, for the awe felt by the earliest Roman in the presence of his *numina*. My question is whether his methods of approaching these *numina* contained appreciable survivals of magic. Can we see in his efforts any attempt not so much to placate the *numina* as to attain control over natural forces by means of some power superior to the *numina*, or even to compel the *numina* themselves by such superior means?

Starting, then, with the earliest stratum of Roman belief, as it is portrayed in the *Aeneid*, we may dismiss the magic practices of Dido's priestess²² on the ground that neither she nor Dido was an Italian.²² But we have still to remember the remarkable powers of Virgil's Marruvian priest, who

With leaves of happy olive round his brow
Came, sent by King Archippus. Well he knew
On viper kind and noisome water-snakes
With charm and touch to shed the dew of sleep,
And lull their wrath by craft, and ease their bite.²³

This priest was an Italian, and Virgil was thoroughly grounded in Italic religion. To what extent shall we read into this passing reference a mixture of magic with early Roman religion? To answer the question we shall consider some evidence concerning the oldest gods of the Roman pantheon, the *di indigites*, beginning with Jupiter.

There was at Rome outside the porta Capena near the temple of Mars a certain stone called the *lapis manalis*,²⁴

²² *Aen.* IV, 494 ff.

²³ *Aen.* VII, 750-755. Translation of Charles J. Billson.

²⁴ Cf. Paulus, p. 115 ed. Lindsay: Manalem vocabant lapidem etiam petram quandam, quae erat extra portam Capenam iuxta aedem Martis, quam cum propter nimiam siccitatem in urbem protraherent, insequeretur pluvia statim, eumque, quod aquas manaret, manalem lapidem dicere. With this cf. Varro, ap. *Non. Marcell.* p. 877 ed. Lindsay: Urceolum aquae manale vocamus, quod eo aqua in trulleum effundatur. Unde manalis lapis appellatur in pontificalibus sacris, qui tunc movetur cum pluviae exoptantur.

which was dragged by the *pontifices* into the city in times of drought, with the result that immediate relief followed.²⁵ The ceremony of which this was the important part was called *aquaelicism*,²⁶ and appears to have been connected with the worship of Jupiter Elicius.²⁷ The stone itself seems to have been an ancient representation of a thunder chariot.²⁸ Varro compares it to a pitcher, intimating that it was hollow and either that water was poured into it until it overflowed, or that it was tipped up until the water flowed out.²⁹ In either case we may surmise that the water flowing from the stone was thought to have the power, through mimetic magic, of causing a similar flow from the clouds.

If we are correct in assuming a connection between the *lapis manalis*, the *aquaelicism*, and Jupiter Elicius, we may perhaps be justified in citing at this point the statement of Petronius³⁰ that "in the olden times matrons clad in the *stola* used to ascend the *clivus* with feet bare, hair flowing and minds pure to beg Jupiter for rain."³¹ Tertullian also speaks

²⁵ Servius, *Aen.* III, 175: *Manabat-fluebat. Hinc et lapis manalis quem trahant pontifices, quotiens siccitas erat.*

²⁶ Festus, p. 2, ed. Lindsay: *Aquaelicism dicitur, cum aqua pluvialis remediis quibusdam elicitur, ut quondam, si creditur, manali lapide in urbem ducto.*

²⁷ Wissowa, G., *Relig. u. Kult.*², p. 121: *In älterer Zeit trat bei dieser Gelegenheit auch der Lapis Manalis in Funktion, ein aufbewahrten Stein, der . . . wohl eine primitive Nachbildung des Donnerswagens darstellte. Diese Ceremonie des elicere aquam gehört sicher zusammen mit dem Kulte des Iuppiter Elicius, der auf dem Aventin, also unfern der Stelle wo der Lapis Manalis lagerte einen alten Altar besass.*

²⁸ Cf. the thunder chariot of Allodius, an early Alban king. Dion. Hal., *Antiquit. Rom.* I, 71, 3. Cf. also Virgil, *Aen.* VI, 585-591.

²⁹ See above, n. 26.

³⁰ *Sat.* 44: *Antea stolatae ibant nudis pedibus in clivum, passis capillis, mentibus puris, et Iovem aquam exorabant.*

³¹ That this statement is made, not of Roman matrons, but of those of a South-Italian town, does not seem to me to detract greatly from its value as evidence for customs at Rome. Petronius was writing for Roman readers even though he chose to lay the scene of his *Satyricon* in a provincial town. The tone of his remark fits remarkably well into the rest of the material on Jupiter Elicius. For a contrary view cf. Halliday, *Lectures on the History of Roman Religion*, p. 100.

clearly of Roman customs in the words: *Aquaelicia Iovi immolatis*.³²

But there is another Roman story which connected Jupiter Elicius with lightning. As Ovid tells it, Numa Pompilius, much distressed by excessive thunder storms and accompanying lightning, was bidden by Egeria to seek the aid of the gods Picus and Faunus, who would under compulsion bring down Jupiter from the sky to instruct Numa in the control of lightning.³³ Of special interest to us are the words of Faunus to Numa:

Him wilt thou not be able to draw unaided from Heaven:

But with our aid, perchance, thou wilt achieve thy desire.

* * * * *

Such were the words of Faunus, and such the opinion of Picus.

* * * * *

Hither will Jupiter come down from his seat in the heavens.

* * * * *

What things they did when released from their bonds, what
magic they chanted,

And with what art they drew Jove from his lofty abode

Man may not rightly know.³⁴

Ovid then relates how Jupiter, drawn down by the *ars* and the *carmina* of the two gods, instructed Numa in the control of lightning.

It is generally agreed that the facts just related belong rather to the cult of the Jupiter Elicius of the *Aquaelicium*, and that the activities of Numa were transferred to the field of lightning control under the influence of the Etruscans, who were as adept in lightning lore as the Romans were ignorant.³⁵ In any case we find represented in this passage two of the oldest divinities of the Roman farmer practicing

³² *Apol.* 40.

³³ *Fasti* III, 285-344.

³⁴ ll. 317-325. Cf. Arnobius, *Adv. Gent.* V, 1, who cites Valerius Antias (bk. II) as his source; Plutarch, *Numa* 15; Livy, I, 20, 7.

³⁵ This is the view of Fowler, *Relig. Exper.*, p. 50; Aust, *Relig. der Röm.*, p. 120; Wissowa, *Relig. u. Kult.*², p. 121.

magic successfully on the greatest of Roman gods for the benefit of, and under the compulsion of, a mortal.³⁶

The sequel of Numa's successful effort throws an interesting sidelight on Roman religious ideas. For, when Tullus Hostilius attempted to repeat the experiment, he was struck by lightning and his home burned, because he did not know the exact ritual.³⁷ This is important, for the efficacy of later Roman religion depended largely on the knowledge of how to approach the gods in accordance with a ritual so exact that we are compelled to attribute to the ritualistic expressions and acts themselves a magic, or at least a semi-magic, control of the gods.

Nor was it only positive magic that had a place in the worship of the great Italian sky-god. That negative magic or *taboo* was equally at work in the worship of Jupiter seems to be conclusively shown by the remarkable group of *taboos* laid upon his priest, the Flamen Dialis. Here our evidence is very explicit, but so extended that I note only the most striking facts.³⁸ The Flamen of Jupiter was not allowed to wear a ring on his finger unless the ring was broken so as not to form a continuous band. If a man in fetters entered his home, he had to be released immediately from the fetters,

³⁶ Those who doubt the magic meaning of the Latin words *ars*, *carmina*, *deducere*, *caelo*, *elicere*, may compare the Greek equivalents, *φάρμακον*, *γοητεία*, *μαγεύσαντας*, of Plutarch's version.

³⁷ Livy, I, 31, 6-8: sed non rite initum aut curatum id sacrum esse, nec solum nullam ei oblatam caelestium speciem, sed ira Iovis sollicitati prava religione fulmine ictum cum domo conflagrasse. Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* II, 140: Et ante eum (i.e. Porsennam) a Numa saepius hoc factitatum, in primo Annalium suorum tradit L. Piso gravis auctor: quod imitatum parum rite Tullum Hostilium ictum fulmine. Cf. *ib.* XXVIII, 14.

³⁸ It is given with great detail by A. Gellius (*Noct. Att.* X, 15, 6-30) in a passage too long to be repeated here. Other references of importance are Plutarch, *Quaest. Rom.* nos. 109, 112, 113; Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* XVIII, 118, 119; XXVIII, 146; Servius, *Aen.* I, 179; I, 448; II, 57; IV, 518; Macrobius, *Sat.* I, 16, 8 f.; Festus, p. 153, ed. Lindsay. Of modern authorities we may cite Wissowa, *Relig. u. Kult.*², p. 34 and n. 1; 235; 506 f.; Marquardt-Mommsen, *Rom. Staatsverw.*² III, 328-332; *Anthropology and the Classics*, ed. R. R. Marett, p. 171 f.; Frazer, *Golden Bough*³, pt. II, pp. 13 f., n. 3.

and the latter thrown out of the house onto the roof through the *impluvium* and thence down into the street. If anyone who was to be flogged fell as a suppliant at his feet, he could not be flogged that day. There must be no knot either in his cap or his girdle or in any other article of his clothing. His nails and hair could be trimmed only by a free man, and the trimmings must be buried under a lucky tree. It was not proper for him to touch or even to mention yeast bread, a she goat, raw meat, ivy, or beans. He was not allowed to go near a funeral pyre or touch a corpse. He might not go out into the open air without having his cap and all his other clothing on, nor could he remove any of these so long as he was in the open air; that is, under the eye of Jupiter. Every day was for him a religious holiday.

His wife, the Flaminica, was subject to restrictions of the same character. Neither he nor she was permitted to wear shoes made of leather from the hide of a beast that had died or had been slaughtered for food. The leather for their shoes could come only from the hides of beasts that had been sacrificed.³⁹

Though there is much in the above that we cannot explain, it seems clear that this series of *taboos* was laid upon the Flamen Dialis largely that he might not come into contact with anything opposed to light and freedom. In other words, he was day and night dedicated to the god of light and freedom, and must be protected from all contagion of darkness, death, bondage and the like.⁴⁰

From Jupiter one naturally turns to Juno, who was not in the oldest Italic religion the wife of Jupiter, but rather the *numen* of womanhood corresponding to the *genius* of man. I shall not speak here of her effort to become pregnant by

³⁹ Cf. Aust, *Relig. der Röm.*, p. 189 f.; Festus, *loc. cit.*; Servius, *Aen.* IV, 518; Ovid, *Fasti* III, 397 f. By contrast we may note a positive function of the Flaminica in connection with the Vestalia (Ovid, *Fasti* VI, 226-232).

⁴⁰ For *taboos* in general in Roman religion see Fowler, *Relig. Exper.*, pp. 24-46.

means of a magic flower,⁴¹ but I shall linger at some length over a story that bears evidence of reflecting genuine ancient Italic folk belief.⁴² Alcmena is telling how Juno used magic to prevent the birth of Hercules:

"And when she heard my groans, she sat down straight on the altar
Which is in front of the door, and crossing her right o'er the left knee,
Locking her fingers the while as the teeth of a comb are arrangéd,
Hindered the birth of the child. And then with word that was secret
Uttered her charm, and her charms stopped short the birth of the
infant.

One of the servants most helpful was drawn from the midst of the
people,

Who from her light-gold hair rejoiced in the name of Galanthis;
Eager was she to do the bidding of master and mistress,
Chosen for this very reason. She felt in her heart there was something
Wicked that Juno was doing; and so as she came out and went back
Into the door of the dwelling, the goddess she saw on the altar
Sitting, over her knees her interlocked fingers tight holding,—
And, "Whoever thou art," she said, "rejoice with my mistress.
Now, relieved of her pain, Alcmena, daughter of Argos
Thanks to the gods returns for the precious gift they have sent her."
Hearing this, down from her seat she leaped, and in her vexation
Loosed her entwined fingers, the powerful goddess of childbirth.
Then were the bonds unloosed, and released was I from her magic."

That this story about Juno became common is well attested, nor is there any doubt that it is based on a belief in sympathetic magic, i.e. that like affects like.⁴³ The whole story, though dealing with personages of Greek mythology, seems very ancient.

⁴¹ Ovid, *Fasti* V, 243-258.

⁴² Ovid, *Met.* IX, 297-315. For a more detailed study of this passage see the author's *Notes on the Development of Early Roman Religion*, *Class. Wkly.*, XVI (1917-'18), pp. 97-102. I am indebted to the editor of this periodical for permission to reprint the above translation.

⁴³ Ovid, *Fasti* III, 255-258; Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* XXVIII, 59; Servius, *Aen.* IV, 518; Samter, *Geburt Hochzeit und Tod*, p. 122 ff.

That Juno Lucina was also an adept in the use of magic seems to be shown by her method of assisting at a marvellous birth at which we read:

Stood near the groaning branches the gentle goddess Lucina,
Toward them she moved her hands and spake the *puerpera verba*.⁴⁴

That these *verba puerpera* were magic and a survival from the past I am quite certain, notwithstanding the mythological setting of the story.

We have seen how Jupiter could be drawn down from heaven by anyone who knew the exact ritual. We shall now see Juno and other tutelary gods yielding to the same magic influence of the powerful word. At the capture of Veii, writes Livy, the Romans, after depriving the city of all human assistance, "then began to take measures to protect themselves against the gifts of the gods and the gods themselves, but in the spirit of worship rather than of violence. For certain youths, who had been chosen from the whole army and ordered to carry queen Juno to Rome, bathing in pure water and putting on pure white clothing, reverently entered her temple. First they extended their hands in supplication, because, according to Etrurian custom, no one except a priest of a certain family was accustomed to handle this statue. Then, when one of them, either by divine guidance or in youthful joke, had said to the statue: 'Juno, do you wish to go to Rome?' the others had proclaimed vociferously that the goddess had nodded her assent. A later addition to the story represented the goddess as having expressed her willingness in words."⁴⁵ If this passage stood alone we might dismiss it without further discussion. But

⁴⁴ Ovid, *Met.* X, 510-513:

Constitit ad ramos mitis Lucina dolentes,
Admovitque manus et verbera puerpera dixit.
Arbor agit ramos et fissa cortice vivum
Reddit onus; vagitque puer. . . .

⁴⁵ V, 22, 3-6.

Macrobius,⁴⁶ commenting on Virgil's description of the fall of Troy,⁴⁷ says that Troy fell because all its tutelary deities had deserted their temples and altars, "and this sentiment of the poet is in accordance with the most ancient custom of the Romans, and a part of their most carefully guarded ritual. For it is generally agreed that all cities are under the protection of some god, and that it was a secret custom of the Romans, though unknown to many, when they were besieging a hostile city and were already assured of its fall, to evoke the tutelary gods with a specific charm (*carmine*), either because they thought the city could not be taken otherwise, or because, even if it could be taken, they thought it wrong to hold the gods captive."⁴⁸ It is true that such *carmina evocationis* as we have are religious rather than magic in tone,⁴⁹ but Pliny adds the important information that the name of Rome's guardian deity was carefully concealed lest an enemy might resort to the same device.⁵⁰ It seems quite clear, therefore, that one who possessed both the name of the tutelary god and the proper ritual could practically compel such a god to desert his present residence for that of the *evocator*. Such power of control is magic rather than religion.

The festival of Juno Caprotina also contained magic features, but it will, perhaps, be better to treat this aspect of Juno worship along with certain other fertility charms.⁵¹

⁴⁶ *Sat.* III, 9, 1-2.

⁴⁷ *Aen.* II, 351.

⁴⁸ Cf. *ibid.* III, 9, 14-15.

⁴⁹ Cf. Macrobius, *Sat.* III, 9, 6-8: Nam repperi in libro quinto *Rerum Reconditarum* Sammonici Sereni utrumque carmen, quod ille se in cuiusdam Furii vetustissimum libro repperisse professus est. Est autem carmen huius modi, quo di evocantur cum oppugnatione civitas cingitur: si deus, si dea est, cui populus civitasque Carthaginiensis est in tutela, teque maxime, ille qui urbis huius populique tutelam recepisti, precor venerorque. . . Cf. Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* XXVIII, 18-20.

⁵⁰ *Nat. Hist.* 18-20: Et durat in pontificum disciplina id sacrum, constatque ideo occultatum, in cuius dei tutela Roma esset, ne qui hostium simili modo agerent.

⁵¹ See below, p.25 f.

For those who may be inclined to reject the above story of Juno as Greek I add the story of a thoroughly Italic *numen*, Carna. Carna, who protected the internal organs of human beings, is here depicted as an adept in magic. A baby prince of Alba Longa has been attacked by *striges* and Carna has been appealed to for help:

"Into the chamber of Proca they came, wherein the sweet infant,
Tender young spoil for the birds, five days had lain from his birth:
Sucked with their avid tongues at the pitiful breast of the baby;
And from the ill-fated child forth came a piteous scream.
Frightened at this came running the nurse to the aid of her darling
Only to find his cheeks cut by the rigid claw.
What can I do, she thought, as she looked at the cheeks where the color
Now as like to a leaf, paled by the new-coming frost.
Then unto Carna she went, her grief to the goddess unfolded:
'Cease from thy fears,' she said, 'well shall thy darling be.'
Then to the cradle she came, where the father and mother were weeping:
'Only restrain your tears: I will restore,' she said.
First with the twig of the arbutus she touches in order the doorposts,
Thrice with the arbutus twig seals against magic the door,
Sprinkles the threshold with water—for water is often effective—
Lastly the heart of a pig, the uncooked heart of a shoat,
Which from its mother's womb a bare two months had advanced,
Taking into her hand, thus she addresses the birds:
'Birds of the night,' she cried, 'restore to the child now his vitals;
Even in place of the child, now is the small porker fall'n;
Vitals for vitals accept, and for heart the heart of the weanling;
This is the life that we give, payment for life of the child.'
Then a libation she offered, and placed in the open the entrails,
Bidding all those who stood round not to look back at the birds:
Twig of whitethorn she placed, which some call Janus's flower,
Just where a tiny light entered to lighten the room.
After this action, they say, the birds never troubled the cradle,
And to the cheeks of the child youth's rosy color returned."⁵²

Little comment upon this story is necessary. Here we have one of the oldest *numina* of the Roman religion practic-

⁵² Ovid, *Fasti* VI, 143-168. This version is also reprinted from the Classical Weekly as noted above, n. 43.

ing substitutional magic in order to appease *striges* who are said to be *carmine factae*.

Equally surprising is the ceremonial used to keep Mars Silvanus from a birth chamber. The story is taken from Augustine. "Varro tells us," he writes,⁵³ "that after the birth of a child three gods are introduced to keep the god Silvanus from entering the room during the night and troubling the mother and babe. As representatives of these divine guardians three men go around the house during the night, striking the threshold first with an ax, then with a pestle, and finally sweeping it with brooms. Their object is to keep Silvanus from entering by using these implements of civilization, because trees are not felled or pruned without iron, grain is not pulverized without a pestle, and crops are not heaped up into piles without brooms." Here we have the startling religious conception of men personifying gods for the purpose of frightening off the god of the woods. This they do by using to his face the implements of civilization, presumably hated by him. It is a strange use of magic to defeat a god, made all the more strange because the men who use the magic are themselves supposed to represent gods.

Of Cunina, goddess of the cradle, we know only what we are told by two Christian authors, both of whom probably drew their material from Varro's *Antiquitates Rerum Divinarum*. The first passage reads: "Cunina is present to ward off the baleful (*gravem*) eye, and brings quiet with her."⁵⁴ The other: "Cunina also is worshipped, who protects infants in their cradles and wards off the evil eye."⁵⁵ Whether she combatted magic with magic we are not told, but it seems likely. At any rate we have in this instance homely religion brought into close contact with magic.

⁵³ *De Civ. Dei* VI, 9. Cf. Samter, E., *Geburt Hochzeit und Tod*, p. 29 f.

⁵⁴ Tertullian, *Ad. Nat.* II, 11.

⁵⁵ Lactantius, *Inst. Div.* I, 20, 36.

In this connection we should also note that the Romans had a god Fascinus, whose primary function it was to protect children and generals from the evil eye. The most explicit passage concerning Fascinus is that of Pliny to the effect that Fascinus protects not only children but generals as well, and is worshipped by the Vestal Virgins during certain Roman festivals.⁵⁶ In the case of generals the representation of the god is suspended from the bottom of the chariot, and is said especially to protect the conqueror from the evil eye.⁵⁷ Wissowa is not inclined to give much weight to Pliny's statement about the Vestal Virgins, giving as his reason their rather close confinement; but we shall later see the Vestals intimately concerned with certain fertility ceremonies of a magic character, and I see no reason for doubting Pliny's statement.⁵⁸ The question is important as establishing a very early common ground of magic and religion. Moreover, a longer passage from Augustine speaks of Liber in much the same language, though the ceremony in the latter case is performed by a noble matron rather than the Vestals.⁵⁹ The important words in this passage, *pro eventibus seminum*, seem to show plainly that Varro is here dealing with Liber, god of fields, before the merging of the Italic Liber with the Greek Dionysus. If, then, a

⁵⁶ *Nat. Hist.* XXVIII, 39: Quamquam religione eum tutatur et Fascinus, imperatorum quoque, non solum infantium, custos, qui deus inter sacra Romana a Vestalibus colitur, et currus triumphantium, sub his pendens, defendit medicus invidiae, iubetque eosdem respicere similis medicina linguae, ut sit exorata a tergo Fortuna gloriae carnifex.

⁵⁷ Cf. Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* XXVIII, 22.

⁵⁸ *Relig. u. Kult.*², p. 243, n. 6.

⁵⁹ *De Civ. Dei* VII, 21: In Italiae compitis quaedam dicit (sc. Varro) sacra Liberi celebrata cum tanta licentia turpitudinis, ut in eius honorem *puerilia virilia* colerentur, non saltem aliquantum verecundiore secreto, sed in propatulo exultante nequitia. Nam hoc *turpe membrum* per Liberi dies festos cum honore magno plostellis impositum prius rure in compitis et usque in urbem postea vectabatur. . . . Cui membro inhonesto matrem familias honestissimam palam coronam necesse esset imponere. Sic videlicet Liber deus placandus fuerat pro eventibus seminum, sic ab agris fascinatio repellenda. . . . Cf. Pliny. *Nat. Hist.* XIX, 50.

Roman matron of the highest respectability thought it not unbecoming for her to place a garland on such a *turpe membrum*, to protect the fields from *fascinatio*, or the evil eye, why should it be thought improbable that the Vestal Virgins took part in the worship of Fascinus? My own belief is that in Fascinus we have an *indigitamentum* of the oldest type, which it was quite fitting for the Vestals to worship.⁶⁰

So far I have dealt with gods who were controlled by magic, with gods who used magic, and with gods who averted magic. The greater part of our evidence, however, has to do with magic as a constituent part of the worship of various divinities. In this part of my paper I shall have to hasten over the material, because it is rather abundant.

In the beginning it may be said that almost all these magico-religious ceremonies have as their object the increase of crops, of herds, and of human population. They are, in other words, the natural product of a simple pastoral and agricultural life. Their very simplicity vouches for their antiquity and their purely Italic character.

We have already seen how Liber was besought to give bountiful crops (*pro eventibus seminum*) by means of a ceremony centering around a representation of the *membrum virile* as a symbol of fertility; a method of procedure based entirely upon sympathetic magic. We shall now consider the Parilia, or feast of Pales.

First let us note that the Romans were uncertain whether Pales was a male or a female divinity; an uncertainty which is a guarantee that the worship of Pales goes back to a distant past, when the *numina* of the Roman farmer were so hazily conceived that sex was a matter of little concern.⁶¹ Pales was the god or goddess of the pasture lands, and her

⁶⁰ Frazer (*Golden Bough*³, pt. I, vol. II, p. 229) draws an instructive parallel from Herero customs.

⁶¹ Ovid, our chief authority, calls her (*Fasti* IV, 722 f.) *alma Pales*; and in general fertility charms are closely connected with female divinities.

worship was originally entirely rustic, though later transferred to the city and there transformed to some extent.⁶² In the rural festival the shepherd decked his sheepfold with green boughs and hung a great wreath on the gate; at day-break he purified the sheep by sprinkling and sweeping the fold. "Then a fire was made of heaps of straw, olive branches and laurel, to give good omen by the crackling, and through this apparently the shepherds leapt, and the flocks were driven."⁶³ Burning sulphur was also used for its purifying effect, though it is not clear at just what part of the ceremony.⁶⁴ The shepherd then offered simple foods to the goddess, and uttered his petition in very simple fashion, exhibiting that awe of the unknown, that fear of committing an unwitting sin, which we associate with the earliest Italic religion.⁶⁵ This prayer the shepherd repeated four times, facing the east, and wetting his hands with the morning dew. Then, having drunk freely of heated wine, he leaped over the burning heaps.⁶⁶

In this rustic celebration there is much of magic: the green boughs, the fire, the leaping and the wetting of the hands with dew. Both Frazer⁶⁷ and Mannhardt⁶⁸ have studied the rite carefully and have brought to bear upon it their great knowledge of European and other parallels. They are agreed as to their general results, though not dogmatic. To quote Frazer: These investigations "seem to show that when the Italian shepherd hung green boughs on

⁶² Ovid gives the details both of the urban (*Fasti* IV, 721-734) and of the rustic (*Fasti* IV, 735-782) celebration.

⁶³ Fowler, *Rom. Fest.*, p. 81. Many of the details given above are taken from this valuable work, pp. 79-85. Cf. Aust. *Relig. der. Röm.*, p. 169.

⁶⁴ This remark is unfortunately true of much of the valuable material in Ovid's account. The details are given one after the other, but whether in chronological sequence we cannot be sure.

⁶⁵ Ovid, *Fasti* IV, 747-776.

⁶⁶ Ovid, *Fasti* IV, 779-782. Cf. Propertius, IV, 4, 74.

⁶⁷ *Golden Bough*³, pt. I, vol. 2, pp. 229, 324-330, 342-348.

⁶⁸ *Antike Wald- und Feldkulte*, Vol. II, pp. 310 ff.

his folds, and garlands on his doors, he did so in order to keep witches from his ewes; and that in fumigating his flocks with sulphur and driving them over a fire of straw he sought to interpose a fiery barrier between them and the powers of evil, whether these were conceived as witches or mischievous spirits."⁶⁹

Concerning leaping and leaping dances in general it is of interest to cite here a recently discovered chant of the Kouretes. "'Leap,' they sang, 'for full jars, and leap for fleecy flocks and leap for fields of fruit and for hives to bring increase.'"⁷⁰ Apparently in all such ceremonies the upward spring of the leaper was thought to have a sympathetic effect upon the springing crops and upon the fecundity of live-stock as well.

As to wetting one's hands with morning dew, the efficacy of dew has long been recognized in various folk beliefs, especially in connection with agriculture.⁷¹

The urban celebration of the Parilia had, of course, lost its intimate touch with the actualities of shepherd life. And as it drew away from rural simplicity it came under the manipulations of the priests. This change brought the Parilia into close relation with two other fertility festivals, the rite of the October horse and the Fordicidia, which we shall discuss presently. It is enough here to note that in Rome those who celebrated the Parilia obtained the important magic constituents from the Vestals.⁷² These were the blood from the tail of the October horse mixed with the

⁶⁹ *Golden Bough*³, pt. I, vol. 2, pp. 342 f.

⁷⁰ Halliday, Wm. R., *Lectures on the History of Roman Religion*, p. 47. Unfortunately Professor Halliday does not give the source of his information.

⁷¹ Cf. the author's *Roman Farmer and the Moon* (Transactions of the American Philological Association, vol. XLIX, 1918) p. 68. Fowler, *Rom. Fest.*, p. 82, n. 3.

⁷² Ovid, *Fasti* IV, 731-733:

I, pete Virginea, populus, suffimen ab ara:
Vesta dabit; Vestae munere purus eris.
Sanguis equi suffimen erit, vitulique favilla.

ashes of unborn calves burnt at the Fordicidia. This mixture was thrown into the fire over which the celebrant leaped.

As to the meaning of all this we cannot be certain, but it seems fairly probable that Mannhardt⁷³ and Frazer⁷⁴ are correct in their conclusion that such ceremonies are an effort to procure sunshine, and are comparable to Easter and Midsummer fires of to-day. If this is true, the effort to produce sunshine by means of a fire rite is sympathetic magic; and the blood of the horse and the ashes of calves are added to insure fertility.⁷⁵

With this fire ceremony we may compare that of the *Hirpi Sorani* of Mt. Soracte. The name of the god in whose honor the rite was performed is not known. In the earliest records he is called merely *Soranus*, or the god of Soracte. The adjectival character of this name bears witness to its antiquity. Later he was called *Apollō Soranus*; but that does not concern us, except to give the possible hint that the original, unnamed god was probably a god of sunshine, and the rite an attempt to procure sunshine.⁷⁶ However that may be, the facts, as related by Pliny,⁷⁷ are as follows: "Not far from the city of Rome in the country of the Falisci live a few families called Hirpi. These at a celebration held annually on Mt. Soracte in honor of Apollō walk over a heap of burning coals without being burned; and on account of this peculiar power they are perpetually excused by a decree of the senate from military duty and all other

⁷³ *Antike Wald- und Feldkulte*, Vol. II, p. 316.

⁷⁴ *Golden Bough*³, pt. I, vol. 2, pp. 229; 272 f.; 325 ff.

⁷⁵ Fowler (*Rom. Fest.*, p. 84) thinks the Roman rite does not give much support to this theory.

⁷⁶ Such is the view of Mannhardt (*Antike Wald- und Feldkulte*, II, 318 ff). It should be noted, however, that so great an authority as Wissowa (*Relig. und Kult.*² 238 and n. 8) calls such speculations "geistreiche, aber sehr hypothetische Ausführungen."

⁷⁷ *Nat. Hist.* VII, 19.

obligations."⁷⁸ It is true that Varro was skeptical of this performance; not indeed questioning the fact, but expressing his conviction that the performers protected their feet with some medicament.⁷⁹ But modern investigations of similar performances in China, India and the Fiji islands prove that Varro's skepticism was unwarranted. No one has been able to explain how the rite is or was performed. With that question, however, we are not concerned. Whatever its origin and whoever the original god was, the Faliscan rite was based on a magic control of the effects of fire, and was probably an attempt to produce sunshine by means of a mimetic rite involving fire.⁸⁰

We have had occasion already to refer to the rite of the October horse. This was an important fertility charm of which we have a rather extended notice by Festus and a second by Paulus, both very likely based upon statements of the learned Verrius Flaccus. According to Festus, the October horse, the right-hand member of a victorious racing team, was sacrificed annually in the Campus Martius in October.⁸¹ Then the men of the Subura engaged in a strenuous fight with those of the Sacra Via for Possession of victim's head. The men of the Sacra Via, if victorious, fixed the trophy on the wall of the Regia; the victors of the Subura, on the Mamilian tower. The tail, however, was carried with the utmost speed to the Regia in order that the blood might there trickle onto the sacred hearth and

⁷⁸ Cf. Silius Italicus, V, 175-181; Vergil, *Aen.* XI, 785 ff.; Lang, A., *Magic and Religion*, p. 270 ff.

⁷⁹ Servius, *Aen.* XI, 787.

⁸⁰ An excellent discussion of this problem will be found in Professor Lily Ross Taylor's *Local Cults in Etruria*, pp. 83-91.

⁸¹ p. 190, ed. Lindsay: October equus appellatur, qui in campo Martio mense Octobri immolatur quotannis Marti, bigarum victricum dexterior. De cuius capite non levis contentio solebat esse inter Suburanenses, et Sacra vienses, ut hi in Regiae pariete, illi ad turrin Mamilian id figerent; eiusdemque coda tanta celeritate perfertur in regiam, ut ex ea sanguis destillet in focum, participandae rei divinae gratia. Quem hostiae loco quidam Marti bellico deo sacrari dicunt. . . .

become an important part of the ritualistic equipment of the Vestals. "Some say that the blood is dedicated to Mars, the god of war, in place of the victim." The passage in Paulus differs somewhat from the preceding.⁸² In it we are informed that "it was customary to deck with cakes the head of the horse which had been sacrificed in the Campus Martius on the ides of October, because that sacrifice was made *ob frugum eventum*."⁸³ He then adds the surprising statement that "the horse was sacrificed in preference to the ox because the horse is suited to war, the ox to producing crops."

These two passages supplement one another admirably until we get to the last statement of each. Here neither is consistent with the previous part of the passage in which it occurs. In Festus the statement beginning with *quem hostiae loco* is appended to what precedes rather clumsily; while the last statement in Paulus is diametrically opposed to the words immediately preceding it. In each case I suspect that the *epitomator*, connecting the rite with the Campus Martius and knowing Mars only as a god of war, has added to the text of Verrius Flaccus in rather clumsy fashion. In that case we may omit all consideration of the discordant additions.

The other features of the rite are not only clearly set forth by our Roman informants, but they are parallel to numerous rites of the harvest-festival type all over Europe. That the rite of the October horse belongs to the class of fertility charms seems to be clear, not only from the express words of Paulus, but also from the use of cakes to decorate the head. Likewise, the use of the head as a trophy seems, if we may judge from modern European parallels, to signify that it is

⁸² p. 246 ed. Lindsay. *Panibus redimibant caput equi immolati idibus Octobribus in campo Martio, quia id sacrificium fiebat ob frugum eventum; et equus potius quam bos immolabatur, quod hic bello, bos frugibus pariendis est aptus.*

⁸³ Cf. almost the identical words concerning Liber, above, p. 17.

a representation of the Corn-spirit prominently displayed in order to bring fertility and ward off evils. The blood from the tail was equally efficacious, especially when mixed with the ashes of the unborn calves of the *Fordicidia*.⁸⁴

The latter festival, sacred to Tellus, was celebrated April 15. "It consisted in the slaughter of pregnant cows (*hordae* or *fordae*), one in the Capitol and one in each of the thirty curiae. . . . The unborn calves were torn by the attendants of the *virgo vestalis maxima* from the womb of the mother and burnt, and their ashes were kept by the Vestals for use at the Parilia a few days later."⁸⁵ It is not difficult to understand how ashes of such calves might be thought a valuable means of increasing fertility. Such practices are based on sympathetic magic.⁸⁶

In like fashion at the Floralia goats and hares were turned loose in the Circus Maximus and then hunted back into a net.⁸⁷ It is probable that they were released in the belief that the releasing of such prolific animals would by sympathy release the growing powers of fecund nature; and

⁸⁴ Cf. above, p. 22; and see Fowler, *Rom. Fest.*, pp. 241-250, for an excellent discussion. An opposing view is set forth by Wissowa, *Relig. u. Kult.*², 144 f.

⁸⁵ Fowler, *Rom. Fest.*, p. 71.

⁸⁶ Ovid, *Fasti* IV, 630 ff. is our best source

Pontifices, forda sacra citate bove.

Forda ferens bos est fecundaque, dicta ferendo:

Hinc etiam fetus nomen habere putant.

Nunc gravidum pecus est: gravae nunc semine terrae.

Telluri plenae victima plena datur.

Pars cadit arce Iovis: ter denas Curia vaccas

Accipit, et largo sparsa cruore madet.

Ast ubi visceribus vitulos rapuere ministri,

Sectaue fumosis exta dedere focis;

Ignem cremat vitulos, quae natu maxima Virgo est,

Luce Palis populos purget ut ille cinis.

Cf. Varro, *Ling. Lat.* VI, 15; *C. I. L.*², I, p. 315. Aust, *Relig. der Röm.*, p. 169. For an interpretation cf. Frazer, *Gold. Bough*³, pt. I, vol. II, p. 229.

⁸⁷ Ovid, *Fasti* V, 371 f.

Cur tibi pro Libycis clauduntur rete leaenis

Imbelles capreae, sollicitusque lepus?

Cf. Fowler, *Rom. Fest.*, p. 94.

that they were driven back into the net because their kind was destructive of Flora's kingdom. In both cases the religious rite is imitative and closely akin to sympathetic magic.

To what god the Lupercalia were sacred and what priest officiated at the rite we do not know, but we are unusually well informed about the rite itself.⁸⁸ All the details bear witness to its antiquity. The peculiar features of the festival—the sacrifice of a goat and a dog, the smearing of the blood of these animals on the faces of the two naked Luperci, the wiping off of the blood with wool dipped in milk, the necessity that the Luperci laugh while being cleansed, the girding of the loins of the Luperci with the skins of the sacrificial animals, the running around the Palatine, the striking of women with strips of the skins—all these practices are very ancient and have given rise to much speculation.

But that they were mimetic, and some of them, at least, magic in character seems hardly to be doubted. In particular it seems quite clear that the idea that all matrons who were struck with the strips of goat or dog skin became pregnant is an application of the familiar *similia similibus* of magic practice. In other words, since dogs and goats are unusually prolific, to be struck with a piece of skin from such sacrificial animals would strike their fecundity, so to speak, into the eager matrons who presented themselves for that purpose.⁸⁹

The festival of Juno Caprotina probably had a similar object in view. The fact that this festival was celebrated

⁸⁸ See Fowler, *Rom. Fest.*, p. 312 f.; Wissowa, *Relig. u. Kult.*², p. 209 f.

⁸⁹ See Fowler, *Rom. Fest.*, p. 310 ff.; Mannhardt, *Mythologische Forschungen*, pp. 72-155, especially pp. 153-155; Aust, *Relig. der Röm.*, p. 176; Wissowa, *Relig. u. Kult.*², p. 209 f.; Franklin, A. M., *The Lupercalia* (New York, 1921) passim. Of the classical authors see Dionysius of Halicarnassus, I, 32; 5; 79; 80; Ovid, *Fasti*, II, 267 f.; Plutarch, *Caesar* 61; *Romulus* 21; Valerius Maximus, II, 2, 9; Propertius, V (IV), 1, 26.

under a wild fig tree, that the fig was considered a representative of the *pudendum muliebre*,⁹⁰ that the tree itself was called *caprificus*, thus associating it with the prolific animal of Juno, that the goat skin was a part of the official dress of Lanuvian Juno, that strokes with a strip of goat skin at the Lupercalia were thought to produce fertility—all these facts indicate a very early association of ideas akin to magic in the festival of Juno Caprotina.⁹¹

The grape crop was also thought to be increased by the practice of hanging small woolen balls or woolen effigies of men from trees, if we may believe Vergil:

Thee, too, Bacchus, they call and hang with songs that are joyous

Soft swinging balls for thee from the limb of the lofty pine tree:

Hence every vineyard doth grow big with abundance of fruitage, . . .⁹²

Similar balls and effigies were hung up at the *Feriae Latinae* and the *Paganalia*, apparently in the spirit of jollity, to ward off evil, and, perhaps, to insure a bountiful crop.⁹³ Akin to this custom was that of throwing puppets of human shape,

⁹⁰ So also the *concha Veneris*.

⁹¹ Cf. Wissowa, *Relig. u. Kult.*², p. 184 f. The pertinent passages in classical authors are: Varro, *Ling. Lat.* VI, 18; Ovid, *Fasti* II, 427 ff.; Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* XXVIII, 255 f.; Paulus, p. 75, ed. Lindsay; Arnobius, *Adv. Gentes*, III, 30; Macrobius, *Sat.* I, 11, 36 and 40; Plutarch, *Camillus* 33; Scholiast on Lucian, *Dial. Mer.* 7, 1.

⁹² *Georg.* II, 388-392:

Et te, Bacche, vocant per carmina laeta, tibi que

Oscilla ex alta suspendunt mollia pinu.

Hinc omnis largo pubescit vinea fetu,

Complentur vallesque cavae saltusque profundi

Et quocumque deus circum caput egit honestum.

This passage seems to have escaped the notice of both Fowler and Wissowa.

⁹³ So Fowler, *Rom. Fest.* pp. 96, 296; Aust., *Relig. der Röm.*, p. 183; cf. especially Frazer, *Golden Bough*³, pt. III, *The Dying God*, pp. 277-285. Concerning these customs later Roman writers substituted rather gloomy speculations about human sacrifice for knowledge. A delightful pricking of such a speculative bubble is indulged in by Wissowa (*Relig. u. Kult.*², p. 167 and n. 6), who points out that when Festus says the balls and effigies represented earlier human victims, one for each member of the family, he reduces the whole to an absurdity; for if originally the whole family was sacrificed in person, as later by substitute, there would be no one left to sacrifice the substitutes and no need of substitutes.

called Argei, from the Sublician bridge into the Tiber presumably to produce rain.⁹⁴

In the foregoing pages I have sought to show how various magico-religious rites were performed to promote fertility both of the vegetable and animal kingdoms, as well as of women. I should like to add here a bit of prophylactic magic used to avert a specific crop blight known as *robigo* or mildew. The god in whose honor this rite was performed was known as Robigus, a genuine old Italian *numen*. At his festival red puppies were sacrificed, that he might save the crop from rust. Red victims seem to have been chosen either because that was the color of the ripe grain,⁹⁵ or because that was the color of rust.⁹⁶ In either case we must believe that the color of the victims was dictated by the belief in a sympathetic magic control based on identity of color.⁹⁷

So much for the *numina* of fertility and growth, which seem to have given the earliest Romans their greatest concern. But among those same early Romans fathers of households had need also of protection against the visitations of the spirits of their dead, the *di manes*. This too their religion furnished them in the Lemuralia, though with a liberal admixture of magic. At midnight the master of the house, mindful of old custom, arose, and barefooted proceeded with the rite; snapping his fingers while doing so, in order that no spirit might come upon him while silent. Then, after washing his hands in pure water, he took in his

⁹⁴ An excellent and very judicial treatment of this vexing question, with all the references, will be found in Fowler, *Rom. Fest.*, pp. 111-120. Cf. also *id.*, *Relig. Exper.*, p. 54 f.; 321 f.

⁹⁵ So Festus, p. 358 ed. Lindsay.

⁹⁶ So Mannhardt, *Myth. Forschung.*, p. 107.

⁹⁷ The pertinent passages are, ancient: Ovid, *Fasti* IV, 901, f.; Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* XVIII, 161; Columella, X, 342 ff.; Festus, p. 325 ed. Lindsay; *C. I. L.*³, I, p. 316. Modern: Fowler, *Rom. Fest.*, pp. 88-91; Mannhardt, *Myth. Forschung.*, p. 107 ff.; Wissowa, *Relig. u. Kult.*², pp. 195-197.

mouth nine black beans. These he threw behind him one by one without looking back, saying as he threw each bean; "With these beans I redeem me and mine." After washing his hands a second time and striking a copper gong, he demanded nine times of the *manes* that they leave the house: *Manes exite paterni*.⁹⁸ Certainly these details: Midnight, bare feet, black beans, pure water, sounding gong, prohibition to look backward, and the square of the magic number three, mark this religious rite as very largely magic.

With the underworld deities we may place Tacita also, of whom very little is known that is reliable. I mention her here merely to repeat a story of Ovid's about an old hag who sits in the midst of a group of girls and performs the rites to Tacita:

"And with her fingers three three grains of incense she places
Under the sill, where a mouse secret pathway had made.
Then the enchanted threads she binds on her dark-colored rhombus,
While she turns o'er and o'er seven black beans in her mouth.
Meanwhile she roasts o'er the fire the sewed-up head of a *maena*
Which she hath bound with pitch and pierced with a needle of bronze;
Sprinkling it over with wine. And whatever was left of the sprinkling
Mostly herself did drink, giving a part to the maids.
And as the drunken old woman went out she uttered at parting:
'Hostile tongues we have bound, bound all unfriendly words.'"⁹⁹

The Tacita of this passage has little to commend her, and we agree with Fowler that "in spite of the names of deities we find here, Tacita and Dea Muta, . . . it is plain that this is no more than one of a thousand savage spells for

⁹⁸ Ovid, *Fasti* V, 429-444. The English rendition, though condensed, gives all the essential details. The rite had been treated by Varro (ap. Non. Marc., p. 197 ed. Lindsay) in much the same way, and it is probable that Ovid drew much of his material from that source. Cf. Persius, V, 185-188. See Frazer, *Golden Bough*³, pt. I, vol. II, pp. 324-348.

⁹⁹ *Fasti* II, 571-582.

counteracting hostile spirits."¹⁰⁰ But such stories are not introduced into a book on religious festivals unless the minds of the prospective readers are familiar with such mixtures of religion and magic.¹⁰¹

In addition to what has been said of magic practices in conjunction with religious rites we should remember also that the servants of religion had certain magic powers not directly connected with the worship of their respective deities. The best known instances of this class have to do with the Vestals and the augur, Attus Navius. The story of the Vestal, Tuccia, and the sieve¹⁰² and of Aemilia's remarkable rekindling of the altar fire¹⁰³ belong entirely to the field of religion. But when we read that the Vestals could by means of a *precatio* halt in his tracks a runaway slave, provided he had not yet gone beyond the city limits, we are dealing with magic.¹⁰⁴ The exploits of the Augur, Attus Navius, who split a whetstone with a razor¹⁰⁵ and transferred the *ficus ruminalis* from the Lupercal to the Comitium,¹⁰⁶ are perhaps too well known to need comment. These, too, more probably belong to the field of religion; but at any rate the Augur is doing things that are closely akin to magic, and none of the accounts of the deeds states that he prayed to the gods for assistance. The power seems to

¹⁰⁰ *Roman Festivals*, p. 309 f.

¹⁰¹ Of Tacita as a genuine chthonic deity very little is known. Samter's statement (*Geburt Hochzeit und Tod*, p. 142), "An dem Römischen Totenfeste der Ferialien legten alte Weiber als Gabe für die Unterwelts- der Totengöttin Tacita mit drei Fingern drei Weihrauchstückchen unter die Schwelle" seems to be based on Ovid's story alone. See also Wissowa, *Relig. und Kult.*², p. 235; Plutarch, *Numa* 8.

¹⁰² Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* XXVIII, 12: Extat Tucciae Vestalis incesti deprecatio qua usa aquam in cribro tulit. . . .

¹⁰³ Dion. Halic., *Antiq. Rom.* II, 68, 3-5. Cf. Valerius Maximus, I, 1, 7.

¹⁰⁴ Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* XXVIII, 13: Vestales nostras hodie credimus nondum egressa urbe mancipia fugitiva retinere in loco precatone. . . .

¹⁰⁵ See Cicero, *De Div.* I, 17, 32; *De Nat. Deor.* II, 3, 9; Livy, I, 36, 4; Dionys. Hal., *Antiq. Rom.* III, 71; Valerius Maximus, I, 4, 1; Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* XV, 77; Florus, I, 1, 5, 3-5; Apuleius, *De Deo Socrat.* VII, 135.

¹⁰⁶ See Hülsen, *Roman Forum*, p. 6; Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* XV, 77.

have been his in his own right; and such power is magic, though in this case exercised by an expert in religion.

CONCLUSIONS

If we accept as our definition of religion "the elemental fear or awe which a human being feels in the presence of natural phenomena which he cannot explain," and identify such phenomena with the animistic *numina* of the primitive Roman, we discover that from the earliest time of which we have any knowledge the Roman addressed his *numina* in a manner not altogether characterized by *fear* and *awe*; but often imperiously, as one who knew how to control such powers.

We find Numa represented in the earliest traditions as making much of his power to control Jupiter; and we find that this power was based on an accurate knowledge of a very exact ritual. We have seen Juno and Mars Silvanus controlled by mortals who knew the proper magic. We have seen Janus, Juno, Carna, Cunina, Fascinus, Picus and Faunus as adepts in magic. We have noted numerous fertility charms which mingled magic with religion; nearly all of them closely connected with the worship of female deities. Certainly the sacrifice of red puppies to Robigus for the purpose of averting red rust is based on sympathetic magic. The exorcism of the *manes paterni* at the Lemuralia and the rites of Tacita, though catalogued as religion, are clearly magic. Vestals and augurs show their power to control natural forces by supernatural means.

Our study has shown that one of the most characteristic features of Roman religion was its insistence upon the knowledge of exact formulae, in order properly to approach the gods. Such a knowledge, as we have shown in the *evocationes* of tutelary deities, had compelling force. If this is true, we can easily understand how the magic element in

Roman religion became obscured by being incorporated in the religion itself. But, nevertheless, when a priest by using an exact formula, compels a god to act he is practicing magic. This particular form of magic became, in fact, the basis of Roman religion.

To conclude, there is in my opinion much more of magic surviving in early Roman religion than most authorities admit. In fact, Roman religion itself was based largely on a contractual relationship between worshipper and deity; a relationship which implied exact knowledge of ritual on the part of the priest and the necessity of compliance on the part of the deity. This amounts practically to magic control of the gods through a knowledge of ritual. In other words, as Professor Kirby Flower Smith expressed it some years ago,¹⁰⁷ when magic practices became a part of the *ius divinum* they were legalized; and, being a part of the legal *ius divinum*, they lost some of their characteristics as magic at the same time they assumed something of *awe* as part of the state religion. Such a change, however, is rather superficial; and for our purposes such religious practices must continue to be considered magic.

¹⁰⁷ In a letter to the author. Cf. also Professor Smith's article on *Magic, Italic*, in Hastings' *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. VIII, p. 275.